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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 03430

SIPDIS
CXABU:

ACTION: PAO
INFO: POL AMB ECON DCM

DISSEMINATION: PAO
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: PAO:HOLSIN-WINDECKER
DRAFTED: PAO:AALKHATIB
CLEARED: PAO:TRWHATLEY

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6135
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 003430

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/RA; INR/R/MR; PA;
INR/NESA; INR/B; IIP/G/NEA-SA
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE; NSC
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA
USCINCCENT FOR POLAD
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH; PARIS FOR ZEYA; ALSO FOR MOC

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: AL JAZEERA AND BEHEADINGS

11. SUMMARY: COLUMNIST YOUSSEF IBRAHIM WROTE IN "AL ITTIHAD"
THAT AL JAZEERA ABUSED ITS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION BY DEBATING
WHETHER THE BEHEADING OF INNOCENT CIVILIANS IN IRAQ IS A
JUSTIFIED METHOD OF RESISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

12. UNDER THE HEADLINE "IS AL JAZEERA ALLOWED TO ADVOCATE
BEHADINGS?" YOUSSEF M. IBRAHIM OPINED IN "AL ITTIHAD" 09/27:
(ARABIC DAILY, ABU DHABI-BASED, SEMI-OFFICIAL, CIRCULATION
85,000)

"Imagine a television talk show where the hosts debate the merits
and demerits of cannibalism, discussing whether it is good to
kill people to eat their flesh, liver and hearts seriously, on
the air on prime time.

This past Tuesday, Feyssal Al Qassem, the infamous anchorman of
Al Jazeera's program Counter Direction or "Al etijah Al Muaakess"
went well beyond.

Al Qassem hosted an Egyptian guest who over an entire hour was
allowed to advocate, with sickening insistence, the beheading of
hostages in Iraq as a legitimate act of resistance to what he
called "these American dogs", regardless of whether the captives
who are of many different nationalities, are military personnel,
civilians, aid workers, or spies.

They are all mercenaries, the Egyptian man screamed, as Al Qassem
of the Al Jazeera network cheered him on. Truly, he who has no

shame is not afraid. Arabism and Islam have nothing to do with such people.

Where does Al Jazeera, and Al Qassem, think they are taking their Arab-speaking viewers, the young before the old, when they put on a talk show tantamount to issuing a fatwa, or edict, for murder in the name of Islam and God or Arab Nationalism?

Does Al Qassem and his network appreciate how much damage they are doing to the religion of 1.2 billion Muslims, in addition to polluting the minds of many who watched him dish out this garbage?

Al Qassem, whose program is already known as vile, loud, and messy, descended further into ignominious behavior.

As the host of this unbelievable conversation, Al Qassem prompted, watched and blessed a so-called Egyptian political commentator arguing that people having their heads severed from their bodies in the most savage of ways is okay in the name of resistance to American occupation, and more important, to teach the Americans a lesson.

How about what this teaches Arab children? What will they retain when they hear gratuitous invitations to kill, slash, hate, demean and ostracize "the other", including innocent journalists, aid workers, and United Nations officials, both men and women who came to help Arabs of Iraq.

In Al Qassem's television show the opposing view guest, an Iraqi who argued hopelessly that such savagery is inhuman, was at a loss for words. Who would not be?

There is a point where freedom of expression in the media stops and advocating irresponsible bloody savagery begins. Clearly Al Jazeera and Feyssal Al Qassem have no idea where that point is. Sponsors, mainly the government of Qatar, should pull the plug on him, tell him he is fired, and then apologize to Arabs, Muslims and the whole civilized world for this smear.

Like it or not, Al Jazeera has a huge following of Arabic-speaking people. This is a public trust. If a satellite channel claims to speak in the name of Arabs, its bosses and sponsors must make sure it does not spit where it eats.

Al Jazeera has absolutely no right to allow ignorant, persons and reckless anchormen to further soil the reputation of all Muslims and Arabs by debating decapitation of human beings. There are no pros and cons here. And it is not the first time Al Jazeera has done that. For years it has given prime time to the rabid Egyptian so-called religious leader, Yusuf Al Qardawi who issued an edict allowing the killing of Americans in Iraq and wife beating. The other day Al Itihad, the Emirates Arabic daily, to its credit, denounced him as an "ignorant man" misleading Muslims. Abdelrahman Al Rashed, the manager of the competing Arabic network Al Arabiya, also to his credit, also took him on saying he is polluting minds and shaming Muslims. It is now up to the Qatari government to stop these charades.

All this comes shortly after Al Azhar, the highest authority in Sunni Islam, condemned as a crime the kidnappings and beheadings of anyone being carried out in Iraq in the name of Islam.

What's worse is that in an electronic voting on the issue a huge majority of Al Jazeera's viewers encouraged decapitation while less than 10 per cent voted against.

The calamity that most of those who voted for it were Arabs and Muslims living in the West with free access to the internet, enjoying the full freedom of Western democracies.

What does this say? That Al Jazeera has successfully polluted the minds of millions who should think differently, or that Arabs seriously suffer from schizophrenia.

Is it a surprise that prominent psychiatrists say that 10 per cent of Arab children do not sleep for ten days after viewing such repulsive kidnap-and-behead-industry photos and images of people begging for their lives with masked men standing behind defaming the Holy Quran by holding it up high.

If adults are confused, what are children supposed to be? A friend, a medical professional, wrote me the other day an email in which she said, "We do not need nation building. We need nation-rebuilding. This is a big, big issue".

Indeed as long as people such as Al Qassem are not checked, we are in trouble.

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